

identification means is interrogated by the reader to provide information concerning the number of times a particular identification means has been interrogated by the reader.

4. A tool or system according to Claim 3, wherein a response of the reader is varied in dependency upon the number of times a particular identification means has been interrogated by the reader.

5. A tool or system according to Claim 1, wherein the machine-readable identification information is held on a radio frequency transponder.

6. A tool or system according to Claim 5, wherein the radio frequency transponder is a passive radio frequency transponder.

7. A tool or system according to Claim 5, wherein the radio frequency transponder is an active radio frequency transponder.

8. A tool or system according to Claim 1, wherein the machine-readable identification information is held on an optically (including infrared and ultraviolet) interrogatable medium.

9. A tool or system according to Claim 1, wherein the machine-readable identification information is held on a wired or contact transmitter.

10. A tool or system according to Claim 1, wherein the machine-readable identification information is held in a sonic or ultrasonic transmitter.

11. A tool or system according to Claim 1, wherein the machine-readable identification information is held in an RF (including microwave and millimetrewave) transceiver.

12. A tool or system according to Claim 1, wherein programming means are provided to programme the machine-readable identification information for the identification means.

13. A tool or system according to Claim 1, wherein the reader incorporates the processing means.

14. A tool or system according to Claim 1, wherein the reader incorporates a data storage unit.

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15. A tool or system according to Claim 13, wherein the processing means includes software to cause the system to react in a different manner to the identification of respective items.

16. A tool or system according to Claim 1, wherein the reader incorporates a user interface.

17. A tool or system according to Claim 16, wherein the user interface includes a video display operable to display information based on the identity of a detected item.

18. A tool or system according to Claim 16, wherein the user interface includes an audio processing unit operable to announce information based on the identity of a detected item.

19. A tool or system according to Claim 17, wherein the reader is operable to: select an item that the reader has previously detected; announce or display information based on the identity of the selected item; and react in a predetermined manner in dependency upon whether the next item identified by the reader is the selected item.

20. A tool or system according to Claim 16, wherein the user interface includes a data input device.

21. A tool or system according to Claim 1, wherein a personal computer is associated with the reader to provide the processing means and data storage in addition to or instead of the reader.

22. A tool or system according to Claim 1, wherein the reader is a portable reader.

23. A tool or system according to Claim 1, wherein the reader is a toy.

24. A tool or system according to Claim 1, wherein the or each identification means is provided in the form of a label attachable to an item.

25. A tool or system according to Claim 1, wherein the or each identification means is locatable in an item.

26. A tool or system according to Claim 1, wherein the reader includes a response activation unit which is operable upon detection of an item.

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27. A tool or system according to Claim 1, wherein the reader is operable to activate a response activation unit associated with the reader upon detection of an item.

28. A tool or system according to Claim 1, wherein the reader is operable to count the number of items which are detectable by the reader and provide the count information to a user interface associated with the reader.

29. A tool or system according to Claim 12, wherein the reader includes the programming means.

30. A tool or system according to Claim 1, wherein the item is a person.

(31) A method of providing entertainment or educational information or searching comprising the steps of: providing a plurality of items with detectable identification means, the detectable identification means comprising programmable machine-readable identification information; detecting multiple items and establishing the order in which the multiple items are detected; interrogating the items and identifying the items from the identification means; and providing information in response to the identification of an item.

32. A method according to Claim 31, further comprising the step of reacting in a predetermined manner to the order in which the multiple identification means are detected.

33. A method according to Claim 31, further comprising the step of providing a counter incrementable each time a particular identification means is interrogated to provide information concerning the number of times a particular identification means has been interrogated.

34. A method according to Claim 33, further comprising the step of varying the response in dependency upon the number of times a particular identification means has been interrogated.

35. A method according to Claim 31, wherein the step of providing information comprises providing a signal operable to control a mechanism.

36. A method according to Claim 31, wherein a reader is operable to interrogate the item and identify the item from the identification means, the

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method comprising the further step of programming the reader to search for a specific item.

37. An educational tool, search tool or entertainment system comprising one or more identification means each associated with an item, the identification means comprising programmable machine-readable identification information, a reader for detecting and interrogating the identification means to identify the item associated therewith, the reader and/or the identification means including a counter incrementable each time a particular identification means is interrogated by the reader to provide information concerning the number of times a particular identification means has been interrogated by the reader, and processing means operable to react in a predetermined manner to the identification of the detected item.

38. A method of providing entertainment or educational information or searching comprising the steps of: providing one or more items with detectable identification means the detectable identification means comprising programmable machine-readable identification information; detecting an item; interrogating the item and identifying the item from the identification means; providing a counter incrementable each time a particular identification means is interrogated to provide information concerning the number of times a particular identification means has been interrogated; and providing information in response to the identification of the item.

#### Comments

Entry of the foregoing amendment is respectfully requested.

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